APPENDIX A: NO GRAZING ALTERNATIVE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Description of the Alternative

No livestock would be permitted to graze on public lands under this alternative. The analysis of this alternative provides a basis of comparison for the environmental, social and economic consequences of the other alternatives. All current grazing privileges would be revoked.

In the short and long term, vegetation provided to watershed and wildlife forage and cover would be 189,881 AUMs (a 73,778 AUM increase) over the present level. **An additional increase of 28,473 AUMs would be available from the C allotments.**

No range improvements would be built or maintained unless the improvements were considered necessary for resource programs such as watershed or wildlife. Salvage rights would be granted or cash reimbursement made to ranchers who had contributed to range improvement facilities.

The four existing AMPs would be dropped and activity plans for wildlife would be developed on a site specific or areawide basis as needs are identified.

This program would eliminate the current permitted livestock use of **102,251** AUMs. In the "worst case" situation, BLM would require fencing of public lands to prevent livestock trespass. There would be approximately 2,500 miles of fences necessary for this undertaking, costing the private landowners $7,000,000, according to 1984 cost estimates.

The management of wildlife habitat would continue at the current level. This consists of monitoring the condition of sites known to be of high value to wildlife and protecting wildlife habitat in the development and implementation of activity plans.

Environmental Consequences

Soils

Elimination of livestock grazing on public lands would bring about an immediate increase in

vegetation residue and carryover, providing more cover and litter to the soil surface. An increase in soil productivity and development would occur, with an increase in levels of organic matter and increased soil moisture.

Hydrology

Water quality on public land would improve with the elimination of livestock grazing. Increased vegetation production on floodplain and riparian zones would result in lowered runoff and erosion. Reduced runoff would lower fecal bacteria, suspended sediment and nutrient loading of water sources. Increased riparian vegetation would improve stream channel stability and reduce erosion of stream banks and channels (Smeins 1975).

Vegetation

Eliminating livestock grazing would bring about a rapid improvement in plant vigor and vegetation cover. Ecological range condition would improve in the long term as succession to ecological climax progressed with the more hardy grazing-resistant plant species giving way to less hardy "climax" species.

Some range sites would improve very slowly, but eventually would approach climax. Only those ranges in excellent condition now would not show marked improvement and even these would improve within that class.

Without the stimulation of grazing, plant vigor and production would level off and stagnate on most soils in the long term.

About 2,500 miles of fences would be needed to exclude livestock from public lands. Impacts common to construction and maintenance of fences to include construction of roads and trails would result. Livestock trailing along the fences could impact private and state lands, assuming ranchers continue to graze livestock on their lands.

Livestock

The elimination of livestock grazing on public land would cause a loss of **102,251** AUMs.

The loss of grazing would reduce animal productivity on private and state lands, too, as livestock would have to trail to make use of the scattered private and state holdings. Livestock would be excluded from water, forage and shade areas on public lands and would trail along fence lines.

Wildlife

Vegetation availability of 189,881 AUMs in the short and long term for rangeland maintenance, wildlife forage and cover would be very beneficial to wildlife. The removal of livestock would result in an increase in residual vegetation available as food and cover for wildlife species.

In the short term, the quality and quantity of forage, especially forbs and browse, would improve; deer, antelope, and game birds would benefit. Upland game birds require residual vegetation for nesting and winter survival. Additional residual vegetation and greater vegetative production would help upland nesting waterfowl. Residual vegetation for nesting and brood rearing would be available near reservoirs. The quality and quantity of non-game forage and cover would increase.

In the long term, with the absence of livestock grazing, vegetation would trend toward a climax vegetation which is less desirable habitat for some wildlife species. Without cattle, periodic vegetative manipulations by fire, mechanical, chemical and/or other types of treatments could become necessary as a substitute for maintaining the suitability of some areas for big **game.**

Riparian and woody draw habitats would improve in the absence of livestock grazing. However, vegetative manipulation by other than livestock grazing would be periodically necessary, as discussed **above.**

The 2,500 miles of fence constructed to isolate the federal land would be a significant barrier to big game movement in wintering and concentration areas.

Lands

Opportunities for land transactions would be significantly improved since the duration of a grazing lease and private investments for range improvements on federal land would not have to be considered or compensated. In addition, the prohibition on grazing the public lands could be a motivating factor for increased land sales and exchanges with area ranchers.

Cultural Resources

There would be no impacts on cultural resources.

Forestry

There would be no impacts on the forest resource.

Paleontology

There would be no impacts on the paleontologic resources.

Recreation

There would be no impacts from new range improvements or maintaining the woody riparian areas.

Fencing of public land would help to eliminate many of the landowner-hunter conflicts over boundary recognition.

No grazing would have a significant positive impact on recreation by increasing wildlife numbers and improving hunting opportunities.

Minerals

There would be no impacts on the minerals resource.

Economics

The loss to the livestock industry from the loss of grazing on public lands would be **$3.4** million per year **(102,251 AUMs/12 months x $400 value per AU** = $3,408,337). This loss of revenue would affect all other sectors of the economy in the Resource Area.

If ranchers cut their livestock use by **102,251** AUMs, the counties would have a reduction in tax revenues which could lead to increased taxes.

Many ranches raise adequate hay to support their present herds through the winter. With a reduction in herd sizes, the demand for hay could decrease, which could lower the price received for hay.

Because of the increase in AUMs provided to rangeland and watershed maintenance, wildlife forage and cover, wildlife numbers would increase, current high big game populations do economically impact many ranchers. Damage by increased numbers of wildlife would cause ranchers some problems.

To fully protect themselves from trespass proceedings, $7,000,000 would need to be expended by ranchers for 2,500 miles of fence. This fencing could interfere with ranch management.

The BLM would have to increase budgets to support the administrative workload which would drastically increase because of livestock trespass abatement.

Social Conditions

Impacts resulting from a no grazing alternative would be significant and adverse in both the short and long terms with 100% of the area permit or lease holders affected by complete loss of BLM grazing privileges. If a rancher could not afford to purchase hay or to reduce herd sizes and still maintain a viable operation, he might eventually have to quit the livestock business. Impacts from loss of access to public grazing lands would be most adverse to small operators and to people just starting out in the ranching business, as many of them are barely managing to keep pace with inflation and rising interest costs as it is. For many of them, reduction in personal income and an accompanying drop in their overall sense of security could be expected to result. With one or two years of bad weather, negative impacts from loss of public forage would be magnified.

Besides losing the business, he and has family would also suffer many intangible losses, such as loss of the opportunity to live a preferred lifestyle, loss of ancestral ties to the lands and possibly the breakup of extended families and close circles of friends. Income reduction could also force operators and their families to seek off-ranch employment. For those ranchers who are advancing in age or who live 40 to 50 miles from the nearest town, however, the prospects of competing in a larger job market would be dim.

For those ranchers with very limited dependence on federal lands, the loss of access to public land would likely create more of an inconvenience than it would a financial hardship. However, because of the dispersed pattern in which parcels of public land occur throughout their private holdings, these ranchers anticipated having to deal with the frustration of seeing their own holdings cut in half or broken up by fences, meaning some alteration of traditional management patterns would have to be made.